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Linda McCulloch
Superintendent

September 5, 2007

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman, House Committee on Education and Labor
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

For several months, we have been told that a draft of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act would be released "soon." Ample time for review was promised, so that the comments of practitioners and implementers could be deliberative, well-informed, and thorough.

Instead, however, your committee released the draft two days before the Labor Day weekend – a not unnoticed irony for a committee on Education and Labor – with a request for commentary by early this week. That is less than a seven day turnaround, in a time period that includes a holiday. I talk often about how federal requirements demand the same small group of people in my office to routinely do the work of NCLB. The United States Department of Education (USED) calls with an immediate request for accountability workbook modifications, a need for a revision to our allocations, or a change to our highly-qualified teacher plans. My staff completes the work because they are dedicated and conscientious public employees. Frustratingly, though, we are always in a "hurry-up-and-wait" pattern with the USED. We respond on-time to all requests and deadlines, then wait weeks and months to hear back.

We were hoping for a different draft, as I make clear in a set of highlighted responses, sent under separate cover. There will be more commentary from my office in weeks to come. But we were also hoping for a new type of working relationship with our federal partners – one in which our opinions were not incidentally or slightly solicited. I hope that in the future, you can give states, their staff, and their school systems and schools, the time needed to more meaningfully contemplate such a huge piece of legislation with such far-reaching implications.

"It is the mission of the Office of Public Instruction to improve teaching and learning through communication, collaboration, advocacy, and accountability to those we serve."

I wish you luck in your deliberations. May the products of our shared work help to meaningfully assist our nation's students.

Sincerely,

Linda McCulloch
State Superintendent

CC: Senator Max Baucus
Senator Jon Tester
Representative Denny Rehberg
Governor Brian Schweiter